

Message Text

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 4593

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI PBOR LE IS MOPS
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: TEL AVIV 6988

1. WE OFFER FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON REFTEL ACCOUNT OF GOI DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN'S EXPLANATION OF ISRAEL'S ACTIONS AND GOALS IN RECENT ESCALATED FIGHTING AROUND KHIAM:
2. THE ISRAELIS CLAIM THE QUESTION OF MORALE OF MAVERICK CHRISTIAN FORCES IN THE SOUTH AND THEIR WORRY ABOUT THEIR FUTURE STATUS WHEN LEBANESE ARMY ENTERS THIS REGION IS A MAJOR CONCERN FOR THEM. AS WE HAVE REPORTED, IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT SARKIS, BOUTROS AND GENERAL KHOURY INTEND TO DEAL VERY GENTLY WITH THEM. DEPT MAY WISH TO DISCUSS THIS QUESTION DIRECTLY WITH GENERAL KHOURY WHILE HE IS IN WASHINGTON, IF IT HAS NOT ALREADY DONE SO.

3. WEIZMAN'S STATEMENT PARA 2-B REFTEL THAT "THE GOI
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HAD BEEN INFORMED IN ADVANCE OF HADDAD'S PLAN TO TAKE
TEL SHARIFA..." CONTRADICTS STATEMENT MADE BY IDF
OFFICER IN BRIEFING REPORTED IN PARA B OF USDAO TEL
AVIV IR 6 849 0486.

4. EVEN IF ISRAELIS HAVE "NO INTENTION TO EXPAND THE
AREA OF CONFLICT..." (PARA 2-D REFTEL), THERE IS GREAT

DANGER THAT THE FIGHTING WILL ESCALATE. LATEST REPORTS INDICATE THAT ARAFAT HAS GONE TO SOUTH LEBANON TO DIRECT THE PALESTINIAN SIDE OF THE BATTLE. IT SEEMS TO US VERY LIKELY THAT THE PALESTINIANS WILL MOUNT A COUNTER ATTACK TO RECAPTURE THE POSITION THEY HAVE LOST. IF CHRISTIAN DEFENDERS GET IN TROUBLE, WILL ISRAELIS REALLY "TELL HADDAD TO WITHDRAW"? WHAT WOULD THAT DO TO CHRISTIAN MORALE WHICH ISRAELIS ARE SO ANXIOUS TO IMPROVE?

5. WE SIMPLY DO NOT UNDERSTAND WEIZMAN'S REASONING IN PARA 2-E REFTEL (WE ASSUME WORD "EAST" SHOULD HAVE READ "WEST" IN WEIZMAN'S DESCRIPTION OF WHERE PLO SHOULD BE). HOW DOES "THIS EPISODE UNDERSCORE FALLACY OF 10 KILOMETERS CONCEPT"? IF 10 KILOMETER CONCEPT WERE IN EFFECT, THERE WOULD BE NO PALESTINIANS IN KHIAM, OR IBL ES SAQI OR ANYWHERE ELSE WITHIN 10 KILOMETERS OF THE FRONTIER. THE LEBANESE ARMY WOULD BE STATIONED IN OR PATROLLING THIS AREA.

6. THIS SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON A PALESTINIAN POSITION PUTS ARAFAT IN A VERY DIFFICULT POSITION. IF HE NOW WITHDRAWS MOST OF THE PLO FORCES FROM THE SOUTH, AS HE PROMISED AT SHTAURA, HIS ENEMIES WILL SAY THAT HE DID SO UNDER FIRE, THAT HE WAS AFRAID OF BEING DRIVEN OUT. THE LONGER THE FIGHTING GOES ON IN THE SOUTH, THE
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HARDER IT WILL BE FOR ARAFAT TO KEEP HIS PROMISE.
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